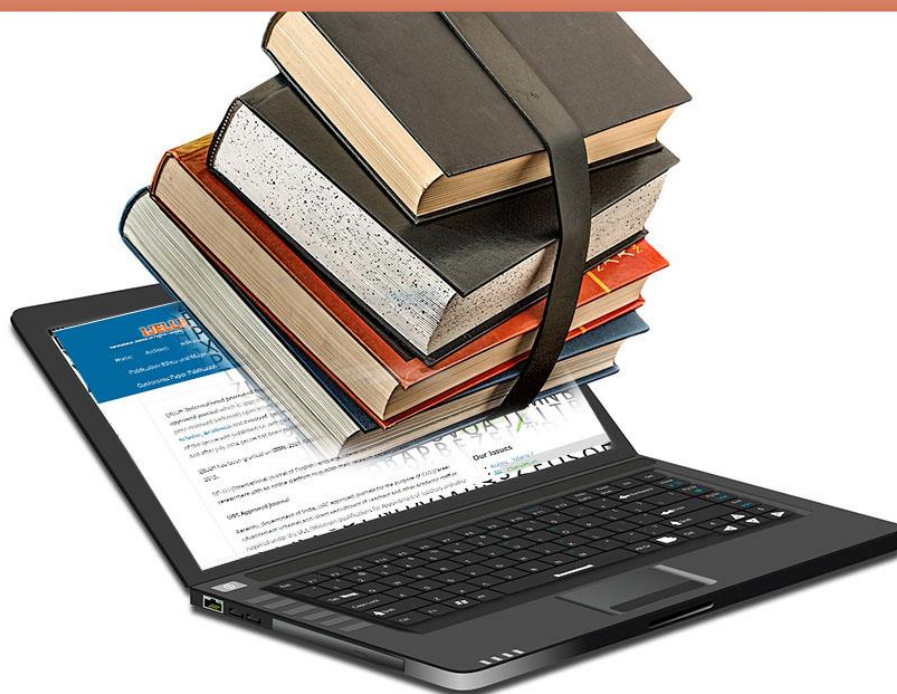


ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
ISSN-2321-7065

IJELLH

International Journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities

Indexed, Peer Reviewed (Refereed), UGC Approved Journal



Volume 7, Issue 3, March 2019

www.ijellh.com

Anamika Kumari

Research Scholar, P.G.Dept. of English

T.M. Bhagarpur University

Bhagalpur, Bihar, India

anamika74113@gmail.com

Rationalization of Cultures – Manifestation of Ramanujan's Personality

Abstract

Attipate Krishnaswami Ramanujan (1929-1993) also known as A.K. Ramanujan develops out of his own emotions and experience but is well-polished by many revisions and is intellectual in the range of ideas and use of philosophical concepts. He settled in America and adopted the care modernist devices of irony and paradox conflict emerged as an inevitable poetic mode for giving expression to their paradoxical positions as westernized intellectuals with Indian roots.

Ramanujan is opposed to the hypocrisy of the Indian mind on account of his great concern for the true Indian values. He wants to highlight the red India free from old myths. His English language poetry incorporates and animates linguistic, literary and cultural forms of modern American, British and European literature. India sources and influences produce a poetry which has many of its psychological roots in Indian cultural traditions but which have been westernized, modernized and internationalized. Despite his environment in the US but with the roots in India, Ramanujan is equally involved with both the cultures. For him the American environment is the “exterior” and Indian environment the “interior”. They are the two lobes of his brain.

Introduction

Ramanujan's creative art embodies another important aspect without which any study here may remain incomplete, and what is more, Ramanujan's art may look distorted. His poetry is "the poetry of encounter, and better still, an east-west synthesis". Ramanujan's prolonged living in USA, because of his professional necessity and his study of modern poets have their important bearings on his art, and on his artistry in particular. A man steeped in the ethos of his ancient land, but making a living in an environment of modern civilization, modern ideas and modern movements in art and literature, cannot remain unaffected by the ambient life. Ramanujan's art is an exotic house of poems which are like "the pattern in a Kaleidoscope". But whether alien or modern, things that enter his premises do not stay alien for long for he himself is already a part of the scene. Let us consider "Second Sight" – SS:

In Pascal's endless queue,
people pray, whistle of make
remarks. As we enter the dark,
Someone says from behind,
'You are Hindoo, aren't you?
You must have second sight.' (Second Sight)

Against this backdrop of a western experience, "Pascal's endless queue," Ramanujan's has, drawn a very human situation of a Hindoo: human in the sense that he is too ordinary like all others to be an exception, to have "Second Sight" befitting a God. Then, how is a

Hindu separated from Pascal's land of disorder and futility, of suffering and mystery? Is he not a part of the scene? Is he not already there in the landscape itself? The answers come in the positive. Therefore, Pascal's world ceases to be merely a background, and becomes the scene of a living drama of life.

Furthermore, Ramanujan's cultural synthesis in his poetry is best manifest in the poem, "Prayers to Lord Murugan" – R besides "Still Another View of Grace", "Still Another for Mother", "Entries for a Catalogue of Fears" and "Compensations" to name but a few, which admittedly have variations on the theme of synthesis. Let us take for discussion the fourth as well as the fifty prayers in the "Murugan" poems:

Lord of great changes and small
 cells: exchange our painted grey
 pottery
 for iron copper the leap of stone horses
 our yellow gram and lily seed
 for rams
 Flash and scarlet rise for the carnivals
 on rivers O down of nightmare virgins
 your white haired witches who wear bring us
 three colours even is sleep. (Prayers to Lord Murugan)

With the very first line "Lord of great changes and small cells", the ideas of two ethos, east and west, ancient and modern, are fused. It is not a patchwork, but filigree. The lord of "great changes" is reminiscent of Hindu God of many incarnations. Here lies the poet's signature of how to manipulate two cultures artistically. This import permeates throughout the prayers. "Painted Grey Pottery", "Lily Seed", "Rams", "Scarlet Rice for the

Carnivals” are non else than the idioms of an ancient Tamil culture. “Iron copper the leap of stone horses”, “Stands for the modern facet of an Indian ethos and its validity can be found in Ramanujan’s poem”, “The Difference” – SS

The last love’s of the fifth prayer would reaffirm the same conclusions:

Ever rehearsing astronauts, we purify and return our urine

to the circling body and burn our faces for full to reach the moon through the sky
behind the navel.

Two motifs, one, Hindu motif and the other modern western motif emerge out of this stanza. The image of “the sky behind the navel” is, on the one hand, a creative approximation of the age-old philosophical wisdom of the ancient India, which professes the cause of creation is Brahman, Atman who is the formless, odourless and colourless one but gives all tangible forms to all things and all nothings. In the Mahabharat particularly, Brahman is revealed in the shape of Visnu. Brahma, his sale agent to design the universe is depicted as “having issued from the lotus blossomed from the navel of faeces”. This motif also means that Brahman himself rose from within himself and spread out into this universe and gave it its form and meaning. The western motif, on the other hand, is based on its modern ethos, that is how the astronauts in their odyssey to the moon, also sustain themselves on the energy behind their “navel”. It is known that for all practical purpose, the astronauts do live during their journey to the man, on their own “urine, faeces”, etc. which are the energetic fuel behind the “navel”. Ramanujan’s implicit irony here does not dislodge his affirmation in the creative energy found at the very base of our own body, as Brahman rare out of his own navel to pervade this universe. Such east-west synthesis is the quintenence of Ramanujan’s creative imagination. On the one hand, his creativity evinces his deep root in his Indian ethos, and on the other, it shows his awareness of the western ethos. Why western. It is indeed our modern world ethos. But the ethos, one modern and another ancient, are never mutually exclusive

aspects of his creative imagination, his creative energy. They are its integral parts, they are it. And irony here does not divert the artist's aim fixed to a goal, rather it steadies his boat to reach the shore. The east-west synthesis in the creative art can be said almost to have reached its climatic point in Ramanujan.

It is true that Ramanujan has not shut himself behind his indigenous dance completely. He is like a sensitive antenna, ready to receive to signals from the wider world, and relay something like an alchemy that his art is. In this context, we may discuss some of his unusual images presented in his poems. The image of Pascal's endless Queue in "Second Sight" – SS is alluded to, not simply as a backdrop against which man's disillusion and despair are to be depicted, rather more significantly it is the circumambient life itself that man lives now, in our time, In a "Dancers in a Hospital", the poet writes:

Spinoza grinding lenses brings me into focus, and I see my small brown hand as a species of eternity.(Dancers in a Hospital)

The study of A.K. Ramanujan's poetry shows him as a distinguished Indian English poet in whom there is a fusion of the rich tenets of his native culture and the detached outlook of the Western thoughts. S.S. Dulai states about Ramanujan who made a multicultural commitment and transcended the limitation of an expatriate poet, in the following words:

His poetry is born out of the dialectical interplay between his Indian and American experience on the one hand, and that between his sense of his own self and all experience on the other. Its substance is both Indian and Western. Starting from the centre of his sense of self and his Indian experience, his poetry executes circles comprehending ever wider realities, yet maintaining a perfectly taut connection between its constant, and continuously evolving central vision and the expanding scene before it. (Dulai 151)

His poetic self presents a unique amalgam of the traditional and the modern. If his sensibility is rooted in the Indian heritage his vision is definitely that of a modernist's. His

credit lies in his remarkable ability to maintain a considerable balance between traditions and modernity. S.K. Desai says that Ramanujan “is not dust that of the Hindu or merely on Indian in the sense that he sees only those”. His perceptive eye roves wider and the limit of his perception is encompassing a wider area.” (qtd. in Pandey, 146).

As an artist who has taken adequate advantage of his multilingual background, Ramanujan had no difficulty in making a success of himself in both India and abroad. Bruce King is struck while raising a point: “how much Ramanujan remained emotionally part of India and how insistent was he to distance himself from any form of the Hindoo” (King 79), Baravara S. Naikar suggests that:

Ramanujan does not indeed make any attempt to distance himself from the Hindoo. He is engaged in looking critically into the Hindoo forms, which is because of, what Ramanujan calls his ‘outer forms’. In reality, he does not wish to distance himself. As a mature artist, he tries to put things and show things as they are, with of course a tinge of bitterness. Ramanujan remains an instinctive insider, emotionally a home-bound pilgrim..... (Naikar, 25-26).

Ramanujan happens to be a linguist, an anthropologist, a translator, and a poet all at once, but it is as a poet and a translator that his fame likely to last. He is a poet of talent and skill as according to Dr. Iyengar, he has ‘established as one of the most talented of the ‘new’ poets (qtd. in Dwivedi, 142).’ For his works he is to be ranked with Ezekiel, Kamala Das, R. Parthasarthy, Pritish Nandy and Daruwalla. His poetry is a remarkable blend of emotion and reason, heart and head. Memory and desire, personal affliction and literary reminiscences and India and America coalesce in it. He is, no doubt, a victim of cultural ambivalence and personal dilemma, but he is an invaluable asset to us. It is gratifying to note that he has not naturalized the western themes and traditions so much as the Indian ones.

Ramanujan is neither a nostalgic traditionalist nor an advocate of modernization and westernization. He is a product of both and his poems reflect a personality conscious of change, enjoying its vitality, freedom and contradiction, but also aware of memories which form his inner self, memories of an unconscious 'namelessness', which are still alive, at the foundation of the self.

Ramanujan's faith in the body is re-affirmed by his typical way of ironic indirections – positive thoughts are arrived at by negative means, by his sarcasm thrown at the so called pure and sacred minds. In 'Death and the Good Citizen' – SS the Hindoo way as well as the Christian way of life are brought within Ramanujan's all pervasive ironic fold. If the Hindoo ethos around the dying is magnificently evoked with subtle ironic nuances, Ramanujan's ironic digs at the Christian way of looking at the dead can also be counted from the repeated emphases on "you" in the following stanza:

Good animal yet perfect
 citizen, you , you are
 biodegradable, you do
 return to nature: you will
 your body to the nearest
 hospital, changing death into small
 changes and spare parts (Death and the Good Citizen – SS)

How Ramanujan's irony is multifaceted and how it is all pervasive are discussed. But significantly enough it is found that his irony intersperses his essential vision of the self. In this context, Ramanujan's individuality is again averted. Again, that irony is not merely a mode ideal for an alienated mind is looked into, in relation to Ramanujan's belonging to his ethos, and it is found that his ironic mode is conformity with his vision of ambivalent wholeness. Moreover, the viewpoint that Ramanujan's world-view is existentialistic is

examined and seen to be untenable. It is established further that Ramanujan's all pervasive irony wields a positive force on the standpoint that the artist is on the side of life, and that his faith and joy in the body is in tune with his vision of the essential man.

An important fact revealed by Ramanujan's poetry is his comprehensive knowledge of Indian mythology, folk-love and religion. His expatriate experiences did not in the least dissuade him from his Indian culture. But possessing a rational mind, he was able to inculcate a practical approach towards his own culture. A.K. Ramanujan also describes the worship and reverence of the animals including serpents in India, as they are considered to be the symbol and ornament of lord Shiva. Even the festival Naag Panchami is celebrated to show the dedication and reverence to them. And the poet also gives instance of this festival in his poem "snakes" – when he says:

Mother gives them milk
in saucers. (Snakes, CP4).

Ramanujan is involved in mapping the mutual independencies of body, nature, culture and time until they cover an immense span of human and natural history (Pandey, 134). Though Ramanujan is primarily concerned with human relationships. Nature also plays a major role in defining his mode of poetic experience. He concludes that man and nature are not separate altogether and there is a mysterious link between them. He also gives expression to his varied response to Nature in different poems. His reactions are personal and unique, but his expression is always, acute and accurate. "Raja Rao and Ramanujan, for instance, connect the past they carry with them with the present as it exists now, and their work grows out of his tension" (Kumar, 148). R. Parthasarthy asserts the importance of the images of A.K. Ramanujan and says:

The images are primarily visual. Words tend to collate together into an image which then triggers off the poem. The entire poem is, in fact, one image or a complex of more than one image. It is in this context that the use of the image is seminal. (qtd. in Bhatnagar 43).

A.N. Dwivedi rightly calls Ramanujan as “A poet of striking imagery and perfect language with”, “as eye for the specific physiognomy of an object on situation” (Dwivedi, 2). Among all the natural objects, the trees have their own peculiar significance not only in the rites and rituals but in the mythologies also. The depiction of “Kalpavriksha” and “Chaityavriksha” in the the ancient Indian scriptures indicates that tree worship in certainly an ancient practice in India. The poems have the descriptions of natural objects such as trees, animals and rivers etc. which are related to Hindu gods and goddesses in one way or the other or have been associated with the deities due to their mythical and religious significance by the people in India.

The poet reveals the beliefs and traditional rites and rituals of the people in India and thus both aspects i.e. deities and nature occur in his poems naturally. Being an Indian poet it was natural for him to introduce the traditional beliefs of his native land. These traditional beliefs have been developed by the people from the time immemorial and who have adjoined them with the natural objects because these natural objects occupy a great place in Indian myths and legends.

Ramanujan reminds of the cultural beliefs of the people. They don't want to perish the things which are attached with their emotions and sentiments. Here the poet shows how the people possess intense love and care for the things which have their place in their rituals, rites, traditions as well as in their daily practice of life, though the things are natural objects. It has always been a general characteristics of the human beings to show intense care and affection for the things that grow up with them or have passed a long time with them and only because of this the poet's mother prohibits the cutting of the tree in the poem “Ecology”.

Point to certain variant uses of “time and tension”, variant in degree as well as in drift dwelt greatly on Ramanujan’s belonging to his ethos and substantiated that the poet, being deep-rooted in his indigenous, literary, tradition, suffers no blight of “poetic anxiety”. In a related sense, he also steadily appears Yeats – like. Ramanujan, steeped in Indian mythology and legends, has rendered the flavours of their nativity into English poetry. In this light, I have tried to establish of their nativity into English poetry. In this light, I have tried to establish his considerable strength towards Indianising English. In all essentials his sensibilities are modern, and in all possibilities, his art is in the making of a classic.

Work Cited

R. Parthasarathy, (ed.), Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets, Delhi: OUP, 1976.

Reference from the poem mentioned.

A.K. Ramanujan's selected poems, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1976.

Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, New York: OUP, 1973.

Bruce King, Modern Indian Poetry in English, Delhi: OUP, 1987.

R. Parthasarathy, Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets, 1976.

Bhatnagar, M.K., and M. Rajeshwar eds. Indian Writing in English, Vol. 8, New Delhi:
Atlantic Publishers and Distributors (P) Ltd., 2000, Print.

H.P. Williams, Indo-Anglian Literature 1800-1970 A Survey, Bombay, Orient Longman,
1977.

For the myth of Kama, see E.N. Lall, The Poetry of Encounter, 1983.